

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1012

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUCHAREST 5601

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CGEN AFSP APER RO ABLD
SUBJECT: CONSULAR ASSISTANCE TEAM VISIT TO BUCHAREST: RESULTS

1. BEFORE LEAVING BUCHAREST, CA TEAM AND CONSULAR PERSONNEL MET WITH AMBASSADOR AND NON-CONSULAR EMBASSY OFFICERS TO REVIEW TEAM'S IMPRESSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, AND WE UNDERSTAND THEY ARE NOW IN PROCESS OF REVIEW WITH EUR/EX. DEPARTMENT MAY THEREFORE FIND EMBASSY COMMENTS ON GIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS, AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM, USEFUL. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND CONSUL MANGIAFICO IS IN DEPARTMENT FOR CONSULTATIONS BEGINNING O/A AUGUST 10, AND BELIEVE HE SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS.

2. USE OF ANNEX BUILDING.

A. EMBASSY CONCURS WITH CAT IMPRESSION THAT NEW ANNEX IS REPRESENTATIONAL IN CHARACTER BUT WE BELIEVE THAT OUR OPTIONS FOR USE OF THE BUILDING ARE LIMITED IN VIEW OF OVERALL MISSION-WIDE OFFICE SPACE NEEDS.

(1) PRESENT CHANCERY AND CONS/ADMIN BUILDINGS ARE CROWDED IN THE EXTREME AND WORKING CONDITIONS ARE HIGHLY UNSATISFACTORY. OVERCROWDING FOR ALL SECTIONS MUST BE RELIEVED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

(2) EXECUTIVE, POL, AND ECON OFFICES CANNOT PRESENTLY BE RELOCATED IN NEW ANNEX BECAUSE OF LONG LEAD TIME REQUIRED
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TO MOVE C&R OPERATIONS. IN ADDITION, PRESENT C&R AREA IS SCHEDULED FOR MAJOR RENOVATION AND EXPANSION IN CHANCERY. TO POSTPONE MOVE UNTIL C&R COULD BE RELOCATED WOULD ENTAIL A DELAY OF APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS WITH CONSEQUENT CONTINUATION OF OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS.

(3) PLANS FOR USE OF NEW ANNEX FOR CONSULAR AND USICA SECTIONS WERE FORMULATED APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS AGO AND ICA

HAS BUDGETED AND OBLIGATED FUNDS WITH EXPECTATION THAT AGENCY WOULD OCCUPY SECOND FLOOR OF ANNEX.

(B. THESE CONSIDERATIONS WERE EXPLAINED TO CA TEAM DURING VISIT TO BUCHAREST, AND IN EMBASSY VIEW THEY CONSTITUTE PERSUASIVE JUSTIFICATION FOR PROCEEDING AS CURRENTLY PLANNED. IN ABSENCE OF ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTIONS BY THE CA TEAM AS TO LOCATION OF CONSULAR SECTION AND IN VIEW OF CRITICAL NEED TO RELIEVE OVERCROWDING IN CHANCERY, EMBASSY STRONGLY ENDORSES TEAM'S RECOMMENDATION FOR "THE EARLIEST OCCUPANCY OF THE NEW FACILITY." FURTHERMORE, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED WITH USING THE ANNEX AS AN OFFICE BUILDING, THE MOVE TO LARGER, BRIGHTER, MORE EFFICIENT QUARTERS WITH A LARGER WAITING ROOM WILL HAVE A MOST POSITIVE IMPACT ON WORKING CONDITIONS, PRODUCTIVITY, AND EFFICIENCY. WHILE THE BUILDING IS NOT IDEAL, IT HAS ADVANTAGE OF PROXIMITY AND WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE ACQUIRED A WORKABLE AND ACCEPTABLE FACILITY.

C. EMBASSY CONCURS IN CA TEAM'S IMPRESSION THAT MOVE OF CONSULAR SECTION TO NEW ANNEX CONSTITUTES ONLY A TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO THE SECTION'S OFFICE SPACE PROBLEMS. WE BELIEVE THAT FINAL SOLUTION (FOR CONSULAR AS WELL AS OTHER SECTIONS) CAN BE REACHED ONLY IF A NEW EMBASSY BUILDING IS BUILT IN BUCHAREST, AND WE ARE ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS THIS POSSIBILITY WITH FBO AREA OFFICERS DEGUMBIA DURING HER VISIT. IN LIGHT OF TIME REQUIRED FOR SUCH A PROJECT, THE TEMPORARY SOLUTION ENVISAGED HERE WILL COVER A PERIOD OF AT LEAST FIVE YEARS. CONFIDENTIAL

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3. COMPLETION DATE OF ANNEX.

EMBASSY AGREES THAT BUILDING WILL PROBABLY NOT BE READY FOR OCCUPANCY IN SEPTEMBER. WE ARE HOPEFUL, HOWEVER, THAT WE WILL TAKE POSSESSION DURING AUTUMN 1978, AND NOT IN NINE-MONTHS-TO-A-YEAR PROJECTED BY CA TEAM. INTERIOR OF BUILDING IS ALL BUT COMPLETE EXCEPT FOR SEALING OF FLOORS AND INSTALLATION OF TELEPHONES AND LIGHT FIXTURES. EMBASSY HAS SUFFICIENT USED FURNITURE IN ITS STOREROOMS AND IN OFFICES TO BE VACATED IN CHANCERY TO FURNISH NEW ANNEX UNTIL ARRIVAL OF NEW FURNITURE. WE WILL SEEK TO AVOID FURTHER DELAYS BY PRESSING ODCD (AS WE HAVE DONE IN THE PAST), BUT PREDICTIONS AS TO COMPLETION DATE ARE DIFFICULT TO MAKE.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1013

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 BUCHAREST 5601

4. EMBASSY SUPPORT TO CONSULAR SECTION.

EMBASSY REGRETS THAT CA TEAM FEELS CONSULAR SECTION HAS NOT RECEIVED SUFFICIENT SUPPORT FROM EMBASSY AS A WHOLE, AND TAKES THIS JUDGMENT SERIOUSLY. IN MEDIUM-SIZED EMBASSY, ALL ELEMENTS FROM AMBASSADOR AND DCM DOWN ARE AWARE OF EXTRAORDINARILY DIFFICULT CONDITIONS IN WHICH OUR CONSULAR UNIT PERFORMS ITS EXTRAORDINARILY IMPORTANT WORK SO WELL, AND HAVE SOUGHT TO IMPROVE SUPPORT OVER PAST YEAR. STRONG SUPPORT FOR CAT VISIT WAS, EMBASSY BELIEVES, ONLY ONE EXAMPLE. THIS EFFORT WILL BE REDOUBLED, AND WE BELIEVE MOVE TO ANNEX WILL BE MAJOR BOOST.

5. SECURITY IN CONSULAR SECTION.

EMBASSY AGREES THAT PHYSICAL SECURITY IN CONSULAR SECTION IS LESS THAN PERFECT. PROBLEM RESULTS MAINLY FROM THE LOCATION OF THE CONSULAR WAITING ROOM IN AND OUT BUILDING WHERE ENTRY AND EXIT OF APPLICANTS CANNOT BE CONTROLLED. THE PROBLEM ARGUES EVEN MORE STRONGLY FOR MOVE OF SECTION TO THE ANNEX, WHERE A WAITING ROOM ADJACENT TO WORK AREA IS PLANNED AND WHERE ENTRY WILL BE STRICTLY CONTROLLED BY A MARINE SECURITY GUARD AND A CONSULAR SECTION LOCAL EMPLOYEE. FOR REASONS STATED IN PARA. 2 ABOVE, THERE IS NO OTHER PRACTICAL LOCATION FOR A CONSULAR WAITING ROOM AT THE PRESENT TIME WITHIN THE EMBASSY COMPOUND.

THE EMBASSY IS PUZZLED BY THE CA TEAM'S STATEMENT THAT
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NO ATTEMPT IS BEING MADE TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY OF VISA FILES VIS-A-VIS LOCAL EMPLOYEES. CLASSIFIED CONSULAR FILES ARE MAINTAINED EITHER IN CHANCERY OR SAFE IN CONSUL'S OFFICE. NO LOCAL HAS ACCESS TO THESE FILES. NO LOCAL EXCEPT CONSULAR FSLES HAS ACCESS TO UNCLASSIFIED CONSULAR FILES WHICH ARE LOCKED DURING NON-DUTY HOURS. REQUEST CLARIFICATION.

6. STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS.

EMBASSY STRONGLY ENDORSES WHAT WE UNDERSTAND TO BE CA TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING NEEDED ADDITION TO STAFFING OF CONSULAR SECTION. WE AGREE WITH THE ORDER OF PRIORITY STATED. IF BUREAU AND CA APPROVE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS, NEW EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE BROUGHT ON BOARD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER MOVE TO ANNEX IS COMPLETED. (THEY CANNOT BE ACCOMMODATED IN PRESENT BUILDING.) AMERICAN SECRETARY SHOULD BE PROGRAMMED FOR ARRIVAL IN LATE CY 1978 AND ADDITIONAL OFFICER IN MID-CY 1979 AFTER LANGUAGE TRAINING. THIS OFFICER SHOULD BE EXPERIENCED. ADDITIONAL LOCAL EMPLOYEE WOULD SERVE AS FULL-TIME RECEPTIONIST AND TELEPHONE OPERATOR. PIT EMPLOYEE POSITION IS PRESENTLY OCCUPIED BY DEPENDENT WIFE, AND WE WOULD HOPE TO RETAIN POSITION INTO FUTURE. REQUEST BUREAU'S VIEWS ON THESE STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS SO THAT EMBASSY CAN BEGIN EXTENDED PROCESS OF OBTAINING APPROPRIATE HOUSING FROM ROMANIAN AUTHORITIES.

7. APPLICATION OF U.S. VISA LAWS.

CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE CONCERNED BY STATEMENT THAT THEY ARE BEING TOO LENIENT IN APPLYING U.S. VISA LAWS AND REGULATIONS. REQUEST SUGGESTIONS RE CURRENT PROCESSING PROCEDURES AND/OR ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANTS.

8. OFFICE PROCEDURES.

EMBASSY GREATLY APPRECIATED CAT ASSISTANCE AND
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RECOMMENDATIONS RE OFFICE PROCEDURES. CAT SUGGESTIONS CONTINUE TO BE IMPLEMENTED, AND CONOFFS EAGERLY AWAIT SUGGESTED NEW EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL.

9. SUMMARY.

EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT CA TEAM VISIT TO BUCHAREST WAS USEFUL PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS. DURING PAST EIGHT MONTHS, AMBASSADOR, DCM AND OTHER INTERESTED OFFICERS HAVE BEEN HEAVILY ENGAGED IN DECISIONS AS TO THE MOST EFFICIENT ALLOCATION OF OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE TO THE MISSION AS A WHOLE. WE BELIEVE THAT PRESENT PLANS AS TO THE USE OF NEW ANNEX PROVIDE THE BEST SOLUTIONS TO OUR SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF OVERCROWDING AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WORKING CONDITIONS FOR ALL SECTIONS WILL BE GREATLY IMPROVED AFTER THE MOVE.
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